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The Underground Railroad on the Western Frontier: Escapes from Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and the Territories of Kansas, Nebraska and the Indian Nations, 1840–1865

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The Underground Railroad on the Western Frontier: Escapes from Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and the Territories of Kansas, Nebraska and the Indian Nations, 1840–1865, by James Patrick Morgans. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010. ix, 221 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewer Galin Berrier is adjunct instructor of history at Des Moines Area Community College. He is the author of "The Underground Railroad in Iowa," in *Outside In: African American History in Iowa, 1838–2000* (2001).

In this his second foray into the growing genre of Underground Railroad studies, author James Patrick Morgans seeks to illuminate as many instances as possible of freedom seekers' flights from and through the western states and territories of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Indian Territory, as well as Iowa. Since these states and territories were the origin of most of the known freedom seekers who came to or passed through Iowa, Morgans's latest effort deserves our attention.

Morgans has consulted an impressive variety of sources both contemporary and current. His intent has been to use "in all cases, if possible the bondsperson's own words to describe the escapes" (1). Sometimes these come from classic narratives by former slaves such as Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, Henry Clay Bruce, and Samuel Ringgold Ward. Others are from Canadian newspapers, contemporary letters, and reminiscences. Morgans found especially helpful the thousands of oral histories collected by the WPA Federal Writers Project in the 1930s. As he is aware, these must be used with great care as "mostly white writers were used . . . many follow-up questions were missed . . . [and] in some cases it was obvious the interviewer had a racial agenda" (198).

As with his first book, *John Todd and the Underground Railroad* (2006), Morgans is at his best where he has done the most original research in letters, newspapers, and other primary sources, namely the Underground Railroad in and around Tabor, Percival, and Lewis in southwest Iowa. The story of the slave Eliza's escape from S. F. Nuckolls of Nebraska City to Chicago and perhaps to freedom in Canada is especially well told (99–102), but the familiar stories of the Charlotta Pyles family and the slaves of Ruel Daggs, both from southeast Iowa, are also related, as is John Brown's well-known winter trek across Iowa in 1859 with a dozen freedom seekers from western Missouri. Nothing of any significance seems to have been omitted.

Terminology is a challenge for those who write about slaves and runaways. Some have resorted to *enslaved persons* and *freedom seekers* as less pejorative, but others find these contrived and artificial. Morgans occasionally uses both terms, but commonly employs *bondsman*, *bonds-*

woman, or bondspersons. This takes a bit of getting used to, although his meaning is perfectly clear. Morgans misses no opportunity to express his outrage at the cruelty and inhumanity of American slavery, but his repeated use of the nineteenth-century abolitionist label *slaver* to describe both slaveholders and slave catchers — and almost anyone else who supported the “peculiar institution” — is perhaps a little harsh.

Morgans has written a good book, but it could have been even better had it been submitted to peer review and rigorous editing prior to publication. This would, for example, have saved him from referring to “the slave ship *Armistad*” (178) when he clearly means *Amistad*, and from consistently misspelling Fredrick Douglass’s surname with a single “s” (136–37, 196, 219). This is not a minor detail; Douglass is known to have added that second “s” to distinguish himself from his former master.

Despite these and other flaws, Morgans has produced a useful work based on wide research. Chapter four, “Iowa-Nebraska” (90–118) is the best brief yet comprehensive account of the Underground Railroad in Iowa yet published. It goes a long way toward redressing the omission of the story of the Underground Railroad in the Trans-Mississippi West from the otherwise excellent *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (2005), by Fergus Bordewich, and from other recent accounts. It is a commendable effort.

Yankee Warhorse: A Biography of Major General Peter Osterhaus, by Mary Bobbitt Townsend. Shades of Blue and Gray Series. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010. xiii, 270 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Robert Wooster is Regents Professor of History at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. His most recent book is *The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783–1900* (2009).

Born in Koblenz in 1823, Peter J. Osterhaus moved to Baden following his mandatory service in the Prussian army. There he joined the short-lived liberal revolution, barely escaping with other Forty-Eighters to America. Settling with his family in Belleville, Illinois, he made and lost a fortune; the secession crisis found him working as a clerk in St. Louis. Like many of his fellow immigrants, Osterhaus, a staunch Unionist, volunteered in April 1861 for Federal service. Elected as a major in the Second Missouri Volunteer Infantry, the approachable, dependable Osterhaus went on to become the most able German American general officer of the Civil War, serving in early contests for